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ABSTRACT

This study examined the educational situations of Swedish students whose parents were both born abroad, using data from the 1992 National Evaluation Programme. The evaluation involved 101 schools, with about 10,000 ninth graders. Students were categorized in the following manner: both parents born in Sweden, one parent born in Sweden and the other born abroad, and both parents born abroad. This study highlighted 576 students whose parents were both born abroad. Researchers examined data on parents' birthplace, students' school attendance in other countries, participation in home language lessons, difficulty with Swedish due to immigrant background, gender, parents' and students' participation in and attitudes about school, and leisure activities. The study also investigated ability and skills, self-esteem, and attitudes related to Swedish, English, and mathematics. Overall, students with an immigrant background were highly heterogeneous, although they had many similarities with other students. They had similar positive attitudes about school, participation in leisure activities, and high self-esteem. Students who had attended schools in other countries had the worst reading and mathematics achievement and greater nonparticipation in Swedish, mathematics, and English tests. The group which differed the most from others included students who had difficulties with Swedish because of their immigrant background. (Contains 31 references.) (SM)

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(Paper presented at the Lifelong Learning Inside and Outside Schools Conference, in Bremen 25-27 Februaru 1999)

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THE SCHOOL SITUATION OF PUPILS WHOSE PARENTS WERE BOTH BORN ABROAD

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Introduction

My study focuses on the school situation of pupils in Sweden whose parents were both born abroad. Interest in their school situation has arisen because of the changed situation of immigrants in Sweden. The aims laid down by the Immigrant Report of 1968 may be summarised as equality, freedom of choice and co-operation (SOU, 1974:69). Research and investigations in this field show that these goals have become more and more difficult to achieve. The desired equality between Swedes and immigrants has failed, particularly in matters of employment (Ekberg, 1990), salary levels (SOU, 1991:60), health (Kindlund, 1995) and housing conditions (SOU, 1989:111). The aim of freedom of choice may be questioned because of its unclear formulation and the fact that it has not become well-established among the general public (SOU 1989:13). Even the goal of co-operation has been difficult to fulfil. *Maktutredningen* (The Power Report) of 1990 (SOU, 1990:44) showed that immigrants have weaker associations with political and social organisations in society. The increased difficulties may be linked to changes in the structure of immigration. While the immigrants of the 60s and 70s were needed as labour and came to Sweden for that reason (Morfiadakis, 1986), the immigration of the 80s and 90s has been dominated by refugees and their families (Statens invandrarverk, 1997).

Even for pupils with an immigrant background, deficiencies in both teaching in their native language (Samuelsson, 1993) and in Swedish as a second language (Tingbjörn, 1994) mean that the school conditions of these pupils must be studied more closely. This has been done in my study by mapping out and analysing these pupils' abilities, skills, self-esteem and attitudes. The connection between the pupils' background, other factors shown to be significant in earlier research as well as school results have been identified and analysed.

Definitions

The definition of the term pupil with immigrant background is far from clear. Its roots must lie in the term immigrant. In research and statistics concerning immigrants, a whole range of definitions appear and there does not appear to be one which has been accepted generally. Therefore, in every study or situation where it is used, it must be defined.

In defining this, the basis may be citizenship and/or land of birth. The basis which is chosen may be seen as decisive for defining the number of immigrants to be found in Sweden. Neither foreign citizenship nor being born abroad can be said to be the same as immigration.

The term immigrant pupil is often used in everyday speech. This term is partly wrong in that many of the pupils referred to have been born in Sweden and have therefore not immigrated. Two starting points are prevalent for the definition of

"immigrant pupil". On the one hand, these are the pupils defined in the term "pupil with immigrant background", i.e. taking as a basis one or both of the parents' or the pupil's country of birth, on the other hand the term "pupil with a native tongue other than Swedish", which is based on the language in use in the home. These terms overlap to a certain degree.

Children who have immigrated themselves and have parents born outside Sweden, are often considered as belonging to the first generation of immigrants. Where the child itself has not immigrated, but has parents who may be considered immigrants, the child is called a second generation immigrant, this also being a term which lacks an exact definition. The National Immigration Agency defines second generation immigrants as children born in Sweden, with at least one parent who has immigrated, as well as children who have immigrated at such a young age that they have grown up and attended school in Sweden (Statens invandrarverk, 1993). Statistics Sweden (SCB) limits this group to include those born in Sweden but who have at least one parent who was born abroad. The National Immigration Agency's definition is thus broader than that of Statistics Sweden.

Statistics Sweden uses the term *"pupil with a native tongue other than Swedish"* in its statistics on education. In reporting, Statistics Sweden follows those rules which apply for pupils who have the right to instruction in their home languages (Svensk författningssamling, 1992). The main rule stipulates that the language is used on an everyday basis in the home. During the school year 1991-2 there were 103 300 pupils in the basic compulsory school with a native language other than Swedish.

My study deals with pupils whose parents were both born abroad.

Earlier research and theoretical bases

It has been possible to establish factors which play a significant role in pupils' school results and social ability from earlier research. The back-ground factors which have proved to be of importance when considering pupils of immigrant background are language and cultural group (CERI, 1987; Glazer, 1987; Stewart, 1993) having two languages and belonging to two cultures (Delgado-Gaitan & Trueba, 1991; Löfgren, 1993), length of time resident in the country (CERI 1987; Löfgren, 1993; Wong-Fillmore & Valadez, 1986), skills in Swedish (Löfgren, 1993) as well as gender (Fraser, 1987; Löfgren, 1993). Factors in the pupils' environment have also been studied. Here the results show the significance of parental involvement (Mortimer et al, 1988; Scheerens, 1989; Walberg, 1984; 1986), the parents' socio-cultural background (CERI, 1987; Fraser, 1987) pupils' choice of leisure activities (Statens invandrarverk, 1982), the school ethos (Wahlberg, 1984; Creemers & Scheerens, 1994; Mortimer et al, 1988) as well as the number of immigrant pupils at the school (SOU, 1991:60).

The pupils who are of most interest in this study have one thing in common, both of their parents were born abroad. It may be expected that the majority of these pupils spent their first years in a culture different from the Swedish one and with a language other than Swedish. Both of these factors have been shown in previous research to influence the relationship of the individual with the school. In this study, I have developed models for processes of adaptation to a new culture and a new language with the help of research and theories on culture and bilingualism. These models are intended to create a basis for the understanding of the pupils' school conditions, as it appears in the empirical part of this study.

At the time the data was compiled, pupils in the group studied were in the ninth grade and thus belong to the category of youth with immigrant background. Young people in this group often find themselves caught between their families and the majority of society. It is always important for youths to be accepted by the dominant group. Membership of the new culture consequently attracts the youths from the minority group, while the family often tries to preserve the ingrained culture. If young people strive to become participants in the majority society, conflicts with the family may result. Many of these young people may have difficulty in developing an identity because they are ashamed of their family and also of their lack of Swedishness. The risk of marginalisation is then great (Olkiewics, 1980). These factors may be seen as influencing the pupils' school conditions and are therefore an important basis for understanding the pupils' background.

The results of research into the effects of bilingualism on the indivi-dual are contradictory. In the texts available, there are numerous positive effects of bilingualism to be found as well as a range of negative ones. Three important reasons for these contradictions are highlighted. Firstly, the significance of a specific language for a child's social adaptation has been a highly emotional topic. Another reason has been the tendency to confuse linguistic and social or political problems. Where children with two languages have problems at school, attention is concentrated on the language instead of the social conditions. Thirdly, research is often organised with a linguistic programme as the independent variable and social factors are not applied as explanatory variables (Bratt Paulston, 1983).

The successful "language immersion programmes" in Canada are often referred to in Sweden. Within these programmes, the English-speaking middle-class children, who belong to this dominant and prestigious group, learn French by being taught in French (Lambert, 1977). The positive effects in this privileged group cannot be taken as a basis in the discussion about how Swedish minority children are to be taught. Examples of minority groups have not been used in the debate about how easy it is for children to learn two languages (Tingbjörn, 1980).

Whether the effects of bilingualism are positive or negative thus depends on factors other than the bilingualism itself. Research showing the negative effects of bilingualism has mainly dealt with children from minority groups who have been forced to learn the language of the majority group, while the research which has shown positive effects has been carried out in societies where bilingualism is encouraged (Harding & Riley, 1993). If a child has problems with linguistic development, the reasons should be sought in situational and social factors (Ekstrand, 1983).

Purpose and methods

The following questions have been studied:

What is the pupils' background concerning the factors given below?

- parents' country of birth and membership of language group
- attendance at schools in a country other than Sweden and length of time resident in Sweden
- participation in home language lessons
- difficulties with Swedish on account of immigrant background
- gender

What is the pupils' situation regarding the factors in their environment which are given below? How do these relate to the pupils' background?

- parents' attitude to school, parental participation in the pupils' schoolwork, parents' education, and pupils' understanding of parents' expectations
- pupils' choice of leisure activities
- pupils' perception of school, of participation in decision-making at school, of the way of working at school, and of the school ethos

What is the pupils' situation like concerning the factors named below? How are these related to the pupils' background and to factors in their environment?

- ability and skills in Swedish, English and mathematics
- self-esteem in Swedish, English and mathematics
- attitudes to the subjects Swedish, English and mathematics

The study is based on the data compiled within the framework of the National Evaluation Programme which was carried out in 1992. A basic task of the programme was to study whether the aims of schools were being achieved. As part of this, the various subjects' content and skills requirements were determined according to the aims of the teaching plans, the subjects' syllabuses and traditions of methodology, as well as from the actual teaching being done in the schools. In addition to the traditional knowledge and skills-based testing, the programme also looked at metacognitive skills.

The construction and design of tests and questionnaires which were a part of the National Evaluation Programme, were carried out at ten pedagogical research establishments at university colleges and universities in Sweden. Even standard test results and grades were included in the assessment material. Since an important goal for the evaluation was studying the connection between and variation of different background factors and the pupils' development, a series of questions were designed to investigate the pupils' attitudes to school and the various subjects, the pupils' leisure habits, parents' educational background etc.

The pupils also had to provide details of schoolwork and, just like their parents, evaluate the schools' quality in a range of issues. In the gathering of all data, an identification number was used instead of name to guarantee the pupil's anonymity.

The evaluation comprised 101 schools (10% of pupils in the ninth grade) with around 10 000 pupils from the ninth grade. In this study, the pupils have been divided into three groups: pupils whose parents were both born in Sweden, pupils with one parent born in Sweden and the other parent born abroad and pupils with parents who were both born abroad. The group studied, pupils with parents who were both born abroad, consisted of 576 pupils. This group was studied in relation to the above questions. The group was also compared with the other groups.

The model used as a basis for the study comprises background, intermediate and result variables. The background variables which were studied are the mother's country and continent of birth, attendance at school in a country other than Sweden, period of residence, participation in home language instruction and difficulties with Swedish because of immigrant background. The intermediate variables comprise parents, leisure and lessons while the result variables concentrate on the subjects Swedish, mathematics

and English. As part of this, the results of ability and skills tests as well as attitudes to subjects and self-esteem in these were studied.

Comparisons between the different groups of pupils have been carried out with the help of chi^2-tests, contrast and variance analyses. In the study of intermediate variables, attitudes and self-esteem, a large number of questions have formed the basis for factor analysis. These have resulted in composite scores which it has been possible to include in the model. In testing these, path analyses have been carried out.

Results

Pupils with parents who were both born abroad show great similarities with other pupils. This is also the case for intermediate variables. They devote their leisure time to reading, sport and watching television in virtually the same way as others. The group has the same perception of the right of decision, working methods and the school ethos as others. Parents who are both born abroad have just as positive attitudes to school as couples in which at least one of the parents was born in Sweden. The rate of non-response to the parents' questionnaire was, however, very high.

Certain differences between pupils whose parents were both born abroad and other pupils may be observed. This group of pupils had a lower participation rate in the majority of questionnaires and tests. Even the parental group had a higher rate of non-response. Around 25 per cent of these pupils did not take part in the standard tests in Swedish. Those pupils who did take part tended to have worse results than others. For mathematics, the non-participation of pupils whose parents were both born abroad is greater than in other groups, but not as great as in tests in Swedish and English. The result for this group of pupils is however worse than other groups' and the number of pupils who do not possess the necessary skills is as high as 20 per cent. The number of pupils who have opted for the general course is also great. In English, non-participation is high and test results somewhat lower for pupils whose parents were both born abroad. The selection of the advanced course is less frequent in this group than in others.

The group of pupils whose parents were both born abroad have an equally high level of self-esteem as the others. The non-participation in the English questionnaire is, however, great and it may be assumed that pupils with a low rate of self-esteem are over-represented here. In Swedish there is a tendency towards a lower rate of self-esteem than with other pupils.

Even weak links between teaching and result variables occur. There are no statistically proven differences between pupils whose parents were both born abroad and other pupils. The group studied is however highly heterogeneous. The influence from different background variables varies. The group of pupils with mothers born in other parts of the world belong to recent immigrant groups. They have more frequent problems with Swedish. Both of these factors, length of time resident and difficulties with Swedish, show strong connections with the different result variables.

Pupils who have attended schools in other countries have worse results in reading and mathematics tests as well as greater non-participation in tests in Swedish, mathematics and English. For Swedish and English, pupils who have arrived during the secondary school period have shown the worst results. Pupils who have come at a later stage to Sweden have also begun to learn English later than other pupils. This of course has an effect on non-participation, as well as choice of course and self-esteem.

A short period of residence is not exclusively negative for pupils. Pupils who have attended schools in other countries tend to have higher values in the three teaching variables, namely joint decision-making, method of working and the school ethos. They regard themselves as being able to participate in decision-making to a high degree, they believe that they can often use working methods where the pupils are active, like the teaching and are satisfied with what they learn. Pupils who have come to Sweden as late as secondary school level value the school ethos more and have a more positive attitude to mathematics than the comparable groups.

In virtually all the result variables, there are differences between pupils with and without difficulties in Swedish. Pupils who have difficulties with Swedish have, like pupils who have attended schools in other countries, high values in the three teaching variables. These also believe that Swedish is important and have more positive attitudes to mathematics. This group devotes less time to reading books. They also have worse results in reading comprehension tests, higher levels of non-participation in these, as well as lower self-esteem in Swedish. The result is also lower in mathematics and a greater number of pupils lack the necessary skills in the subject. In English, many pupils have begun learning at a late stage. Compared to the group which has no difficulty in Swedish, this group has a higher rate of non-participation in English tests, a lower number of pupils who attend advanced courses, lower self-esteem and less positive attitudes.

Difficulties in Swedish may thus be connected to difficulties in mathematics and English. It is reasonable to assume that this is even more the case in social and natural science subjects.

Conclusions

Pupils with an immigrant background are a highly heterogeneous group. This study focuses on pupils whose parents were both born abroad. These pupils can be said to have a common background insofar as they have had an upbringing in which Swedish culture and the Swedish language have not dominated alone. In spite of this, this group is also highly heterogeneous. Many pupils in this study have good results, but certain groups show great difficulties. Pupils with an immigrant background should of course not be treated as if they were a homogeneous group. However, good teaching with a competent teacher is beneficial to all pupils. Teachers in areas with high numbers of immigrants have by way of daily experience a high level of competence to deal with the new demands which immigration places on the school. In teacher training and further training, the skills needed to deal with immigrants have however fallen behind. It should be a matter of course that all teachers should be competent to deal with the large groups of pupils with an immigrant background.

Often pupils' difficulties are explained in terms of cultural differences. I would also place emphasis on the pressures involved in the process of adaptation. The attitudes of the people in the pupils' environment is extremely important in this process. Teachers must understand and accept that there are cultural differences. The challenges which identity is exposed to during the teenage years are influenced by the process of acculturation. If teachers and other adults in society show respect for the parents' culture, this can be an asset for the young people and a basis for a third culture. This third culture is also enriching for Swedish society.

The teacher's task is not to force Swedish culture upon the pupil. However, the teachers do have an important task, since they are often the pupils' and parents' link with Swedish. Skilled teachers with positive attitudes can be pilots in the process of adaptation.

From the description of the acculturation process, we can see that it takes time to become integrated into a new culture. This is shown in the empirical study, firstly in the difficulties which the parents experience in connection with school contacts and participation in the pupils' school work. Reasons for this may be sought on a cultural as well as linguistic level. Lack of insight into the Swedish school system and problems in understanding relationships within the Swedish school do, of course, exacerbate these difficulties. The work with parents in this group is highly important. Information and dialogue with the help of an interpreter or a native language teacher should be an absolute must. No parent should need to be unfamiliar with or bewildered by the new country's school.

Factors in lessons are important for the pupils. In this study there are tendencies throughout which show that the ethos at the school influences results. Adapting the way of working to suit the pupils and understanding what it is that makes them feel the positive school ethos requires skill. With increasing cultural and linguistic distance, new demands are placed on skills and understanding. These fields must be dealt with in teacher training and further training.

The pupils' choice of leisure activities is influenced by many factors. Girls read books and boys go in for sports. The pattern appears to be the same across the board. It is of course difficult for parents who are born abroad to open the door for their child to the literature of a foreign country. In addition there are language difficulties. One alternative may be that the pupils read books from their own culture and in their own language. A simple measure for the school would be to organise the purchase and exchange between schools of books in the pupils' own language. This is also a way in which to accept the multicultural atmosphere.

The group which differs most from the others is that with pupils who have difficulties with Swedish because of their immigrant background. In order to have the possibility of obtaining the same education as other pupils, a good knowledge of Swedish is required. In earlier research second language acquisition has been discussed. This emphasises that it takes time for immigrant pupils to attain first language level in Swedish. Second language learning is also influenced by a series of factors which the teacher must take into account.

The language must be practised in all subjects and by teaching in Swedish as a second language. Further measures in Swedish must be carried out if pupils with Swedish as a second language are to have the same access to continued studies as others. The school must create individual solutions to meet each child's need for knowledge of Swedish. Every teacher should be educated in Swedish as a second language in order to deal with the needs of the pupils in ordinary classroom situations. An obvious requirement is that all those who teach Swedish as a second language have a sufficiently high level of education in this subject.

Lack of resources and skills related to the conditions for language acquisition also affect pupils with immigrant background when it comes to English. In English, non-participation is high and test results lower for pupils whose parents were both born abroad. A large number of those pupils who attended schools in countries other than

Sweden have had to wait to start learning English. Presumably, schools have decided that the Swedish language should be established first before another language is introduced. Pupils whose parents were both born abroad already have an established language, namely their native tongue. Difficulties involved in studying two foreign languages simultaneously are not discussed in the case of "Swedish" pupils. The majority of pupils with Swedish as a second language have attained a considerably higher level of development in this language than Swedish pupils have done with English at the point when a new foreign language is also introduced. Learning a foreign language with the second language as a base can however be difficult if the second language is badly established, since language learning is by its nature contrastive. But with regard to continued studies, it is necessary to have a good knowledge of English. It should therefore be a right for all pupils to begin learning English at the same time as their classmates. The school must find resources to support and help these pupils instead of postponing the start of instruction in English. By delaying the start of instruction in English for pupils whose parents were both born abroad, the school is giving them a handicap in respect of continued studies.

Producers of teaching materials should also take into account the large groups of pupils who do not have Swedish culture as their first culture and the Swedish language as their first language. By using terminology linked to one culture, producers of teaching materials make subjects more complicated than is necessary for pupils with Swedish as a second language.

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